



**COMBINED JOINT TASK FORCE- 82
OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM
BAGRAM AIR FIELD, AFGHANISTAN
APO AE 09354**



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New equipment on the frontlines

Story and Photos by Army Spc. Eugene H. Cushing
TF Mountain Warrior Public Affairs Office

KUNAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan – U.S. Army Soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment, assigned to Task Force Mountain Warrior, were among the first Soldiers in the Army to receive new equipment intended to lighten their load and make their missions easier.

The equipment issue included a new individual body armor, boots suited to the mountainous terrain, and other equipment like lighter sleeping systems and knee pads.

U.S. Army 1st Sgt. Mark A. Eckstrom, of Frazier Park, Calif., the first sergeant for Company A, 2 Bn., 12 Inf. Reg., said the difference between the new and old equipment is remarkable.

Eckstrom said the new equipment provides greater freedom of movement in addition to being lighter, allowing Soldiers to maneuver easier in the mountains of eastern Afghanistan.



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Eckstrom also described a visible difference between Soldiers wearing the new plate carriers and the previously issued Improved Outer Tactical Vest.

U.S. Army Pvt. Mark A. Haas, of Omaha, Nebr., a gunner assigned to A Co., received the new equipment before deploying to Afghanistan. He liked the boots included in the issue because they are better suited for the terrain of Afghanistan.

"They have a better grip, and form to the rocks a lot better," he said. "You don't get as many blisters."

U.S. Army Sgt. Dustin M. Kaminiski, of Chicago, Ill., a team leader for A Co., said the new equipment allows full range of motion and doesn't restrict movement or circulation.

"It's lighter," he said. "It helps you breathe easier."

The team leader went on to say the plate-carrier came with pouches specifically designed for the different types of ammunition that Soldiers use depending on their job in the unit.

"It allows you to be more agile, and also allows you to place your pouches so you're not all bunched up," he said.

Eckstrom felt the new equipment has given his Soldiers a definite advantage.



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“Without the equipment, we still would have been doing the same missions,” he said. “It lets them get to the fight a little bit easier.”

Task Force Mountain Warrior is currently on a 12-month rotation in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

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CUTLINES:



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090707-A-4747C-016: KUNAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan – U.S. Army Sgt. Dustin M. Kaminiski, a team leader for 2nd squad, 1st platoon, Company A, 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment, assigned to Task Force Mountain Warrior, and U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Johnny L. Bates, the squad leader for weapons squad, also in 1st platoon, keep close watch while patrolling through a small village in the Kunar Province. Kaminiski and Bates are wearing the new plate-carrier which was given to select units to replace the Individual Outer Tactical Vest.



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090711-A-4747C-018: KUNAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan – U.S. Army Pfc. Alexander Bishop, a fire support officer assigned to Company D, 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment, assigned to Task Force Mountain Warrior, maintains his guard before moving through a small village and heading up the mountains in the Kunar Province of Afghanistan. Bishop is wearing some of the new lighter gear issued to select units serving in Afghanistan.

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